

Sonic

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Summary: Chris LaSalle get's shot after going against orders to the home of a notorious criminal. Pride spends hours by his fellow agent's bedside waiting for him to recover from surgery. While waiting, Pride flashes back to some of the interesting cases he had with LaSalle, wondering if he'll have to choose a story to tell at his funeral.

1. Bad Decisions

Chapter 1: Bad Decisions

Pride walked into the office, put his weapon in the top drawer of his file cabinet. He sat down at this desk and looked around the squad. "Anyone seen Chris?" The room was silent. "Nobody? Anybody?" The three agents shook their heads and immediately went back to what they were doing. "Guess I'll have to call him myself." He pulled his cell phone out of his pocket. "Last chance." The room was still silent. Pride dialed Chris' number. The phone rang twice.

"Can't talk now, King," Chris voice said, barely above a whisper.

"Where are you?"

"Can't tell you."

"You'd better tell me because I'm getting nothing but silence on this end." The phone was quiet. "Not you, too." Pride paused. "Christopher." No response. "Chris."

"Sorry, King. Had to get to where I could talk to you."

"You didn't answer my first question and you know how I feel about repeating myself."

"I'll be leaving in a minute anyway. I found what I was looking

for."

"You're at Barringer's house, aren't you?" There was another silence. "Christopher."

"Sorry, King. I didn't hear you."

"Just get your ass back here, now!"

"Yes, sir! I'm on the way!"

Pride hung up the phone and looked around the room. "I'm going to venture a guess that all three of you knew exactly where he was and decided amongst yourselves to keep me in the dark. Am I right?"

Brody was the first to speak. "You know once LaSalle puts his mind to something we can't stop him."

"Believe me, we all tried," Percy added.

"Yeah. Barringer's a bad dude," Patton said.

"Bad is not the word for him. He's one of this area's most notorious criminals. He's got at least five murders connected to him. Two of them just happen to be cops. He doesn't care who he kills or how. Why didn't anyone call me?" The room was silent again. "Percy, Brody, you're done for the day. Go home. I don't want you back here til tomorrow."

"You sure that's a good idea?" Percy asked. "What if we get a case?"

"I'll call you back. Right now I don't want you here. You're just lucky you aren't suspended."

"LaSalle may be our partner but we can't control him. Merri's right. We can't stop him once he's made his mind up. With or without us he was going to go. One way or another. Orders or no orders."

"Just go before I change my mind about the suspension!"

Brody packed her bag and followed Sonja out to the parking lot. "He's really angry."

"Yeah, but he'll get over it. LaSalle will come back and he'll be the one getting his ass chewed, not us."

"You wanna grab a bite to eat?"

"Yeah. You drive. I rode the bus in this morning and walked part of the way."

Pride walked over to Patton. "Can you track his cell phone?"

"Wouldn't that be considered an invasion of privacy?"

"He disregarded a direct order. LaSalle's privacy is no longer my concern."

Patton rolled toward his office. "I'll track him and let you know."

Pride sat down at his desk. He took a deep breath and then rose again. He went into the kitchen and poured himself a cup of coffee and sat down at the bar. He looked at the clock on the wall. He wasn't sure exactly where LaSalle was but he figured if he wasn't back in twenty minutes he'd see what Patton had found.

Twenty minutes and two cups of coffee later, Pride rose and walked into Patton's office. "Anything?"

"You're not going to like it."

"Tell me anyway."

"Cell phone signal was good and then it went off. Like someone turned it off and took out the battery. I know that because I tried to remotely turn it on and it didn't do anything."

"Did you call it?"

"Twice. Went straight to voicemail."

"Do you know where he was going?"

"Barringer has a place about twenty minutes west of here. It's in a remote area. Maybe there's just no signal."

"Or maybe he's in trouble. Keep an eye on it and let me know if it comes back online. Can you get me satellite images of Barringer's place?"

"I'll send them to you now."

Pride sat back at his computer. He pulled up the satellite images and put them on the bigger plasma screen in the middle of the room. He walked toward the screen. "Are these live feed?"

"No. Maybe a few hours ago."

"I don't see Chris' truck."

"He's only been there a short while," Patton said, rolling into the room. "Don't worry. I've got the cell phone tracker on my laptop."

"Something's not right."

"You should call Brody and Percy and go look for him."

Pride took a deep breath. "I should." He picked up his cell phone and dialed Brody's number.

"Hey, did he finally come back?"

"No. Can you call Percy and come back here?"

"She's right here. We're on our way."

"I'll get the weapons in the truck."

Ten minutes later Brody pulled up and the two agents exited the car. Pride shut the back door to the SUV. "That's a lot of fire power for one criminal," Percy said. "Are you expecting trouble?"

"I'm not sure what to expect. Get in the car."

Percy climbed in the back seat. Brody climbed in the passenger seat and Pride sat in the driver's seat. He started the car and put it in gear. "Here's what we know: Chris is at Barringer's alone, no back up and his phone has been turned off and the battery removed."

"You think he's been taken?" Brody asked.

"Like I said before, Barringer doesn't care who he kills or how he does it."

"So how are we gonna do this? Should we call SWAT?" Percy asked.

"No. We're gonna search the premises for any sign of Christopher and go from there."

"Doesn't sound like much of a plan," Percy replied

"If you've got a better idea I'd like to hear it."

"No. I just think we should have more than the three of us. What if Barringer's got help?"

"Hopefully, Barringer won't know we're there."

"Sounds like wishful thinking to me," Percy said. "What if he is there and what if he has LaSalle?"

"Then we'll call SWAT."

Pride parked the car at the end of the driveway. He exited the car and drew his weapon. "Com check."

"Brody."

"Percy"

"Stay close and alert. Any sign of trouble you head back to the car."

"Got it," Brody replied.

"Percy."

"Yeah. Got it."

The trio moved toward the edge of the property. Brody pointed to the ground. "Tire tracks. Fresh. They aren't Chris'. They aren't big enough to be truck tires."

"Take a picture and send it to Patton."

Brody took out her phone and snapped a picture. She texted it to Patton. "Done."

"Look," Percy said. "It's Chris' truck." They moved closer. "Looks like he took fire."

Pride picked up an empty clip. "And he returned it. Look around for his gun and his keys. But be quiet about it. We don't know if there's anyone still in that house."

Percy followed Brody. "I'm afraid we're too late. Chris is either long gone or in that house about to be."

"Let's take a closer look."

Pride noticed his agents walking closer to the house. "Wait for me," he ordered and joined them. "Brody, back door. Sonja, you're with me."

Brody approached the back window and looked inside. "No movement."

Pride stood to the left of the door and Percy stood in front of it. "On my count. 3,2,1" Pride kicked the door in with his foot. "NCIS!" The team cleared the house quickly. Pride rushed to Chris' side. "Christopher." He shook the young agent. "Come on, wake up." "He's in here! Brody, call an ambulance"

"On it." The two agents walked into the room.

"He's been shot," Percy said.

"In the shoulder. Lungs are taking on blood. We don't have much time."

"Ambulance is on the way. What can we do?" Brody asked.

"Look for any sign as to where Barringer went. Brody, go outside and make sure the ambulance finds us."

Percy came back a minute later. "He left in a hurry." She set a bag of weapons down next to Pride. "He must have shot him and left him to die."

Pride shook Chris again to try to wake him. "Hey, you're gonna be okay."

"Liar," Chris replied in a raspy voice.

"Don't talk. Help's on the way."

"I'm sorry, King."

"I said don't talk. You'll just make it worse. But don't close your eyes." Pride shook Chris. "Hey, I said don't close your eyes."

"My head."

"Did he hit you?" Chris nodded and then his eyes fell shut. "Where is

that ambulance?"

"I'm sure they'll be here soon."

"Take those weapons out to the car. I want you to run them to Sebastian once we load Chris on the ambulance. I'll ride with him."

"We're gonna go, too."

"After you run those weapons to Sebastian. I need to know where they came from."

"We should just let NOPD take care of this, Pride. Barringer isn't Navy."

"But he killed a Navy Lieutenant."

"Which is why LaSalle came out in the first place."

"Exactly."

Brody held the door open. "He's in there to the left."

The EMTs worked quickly and loaded Chris into the ambulance. Pride convinced the ambulance driver to let him ride with them to the hospital. "You two can come to the hospital after you take those weapons to Sebastian. Not a minute sooner."

"I'll drive," Brody said.

The ambulance pulled away and Percy climbed in the front passenger side of the SUV. "I really hope he's okay."

"Me, too."

The ambulance team inserted a chest tube into Chris' lung to alleviate some of the blood. He started to wake again.

"Where?"

"We're on our way to the hospital. Stay quiet."

"Don't leave me."

"I won't. I promise."

The ride to the hospital was fifteen minutes. Pride jumped out of the back of the ambulance and helped unload the stretcher. He followed it in through the bay doors all the way to the trauma room. "Agent Pride, you can't go in to trauma." One of the EMTs said. "We'll send the doctor out when he knows something."

Pride squeezed Chris' hand. "You stay strong, buddy." He released the hand and walked back out to the waiting room.

He picked up the phone and called Loretta. "How is he, Dwayne?"

"They wouldn't let me stay but they got the chest tube in to get the

blood out of his lung. The bullet hit his right shoulder. He also got hit over the back of the head with something."

"I'll be on my way in ten minutes. I need to call the boys and check on them."

"You don't have to come."

"He's family, Dwayne."

"Yeah."

"You need anything?"

"Not right now. What I need you can't give me. Answers."

"I'll be there as soon as I can."

The waiting room was empty. Pride sat down on a couch and put his feet up and began thinking about Chris' first day at NCIS.

*****FLASHBACK*****

"Welcome back!" Pride said.

"Glad to be back," LaSalle replied, setting his bag down.

"I see you survived FLETC"

"It was tougher than I thought it was going to be, but yeah. I survived."

"A lot of it was probably review for you."

"Yeah. I especially liked the advanced weapons training."

"Comes in handy around here, sometimes."

"So, it's just me and you?"

"Yep. Not much need for anyone else. Not that I'm not glad you're here."

"Why do I get the feeling this is where you tell me all the rules I have to follow?"

"I only have three."

"Three?"

"Yep. Rule number one: You respect me. I'll respect you. This is my space as much as it is yours."

"Sounds easy enough."

"Rule Number two: Follow orders. There's nothing I don't like more than someone who can't do as their told."

"Spoken like a true dad."

"You ask my little girl sometime what happens when orders aren't followed."

"Not sure I really want to know the answer to that one. What's rule three?"

"This is more of a pet peeve than a rule. I don't like repeating myself."

"What?" Chris said with a smile

Pride returned the smile. "Very funny."

"That's all I have to do?"

"That and your job and we'll get along just fine."

"This is gonna be a lot easier than vice."

"I don't know about that, but I think you'll like it."

"So, we have any cases we're working currently?"

"No, but that could change. We're a regional office. We work cases from here to Florida and back west to Texas"

"Where do I sit?"

Pride pointed at a table with a computer. "Over there for now. We're pretty informal around here, as you can see."

"Yeah and I thought I'd be under-dressed."

"We have a relaxed dress code except for certain things."

"Like when the director visits or someone important?"

"We don't get many important visitors."

"So, I can wear jeans tomorrow?"

Pride nodded. "Yeah, if you want."

"Alright." Chris sat down in his chair.

"I was looking through your paperwork before you arrived. You did very well at FLETC. Especially in marksmanship. You were at the top in nearly every category."

"I learned to shoot early. Never lost my touch."

"You excelled in interrogation, too."

"Something I'd already mastered as a detective with NOPD."

"Seems to me the first and last time we worked together you needed to work on your people skills."

"I've grown up in that three years, sir."

"Call me King. You don't have to call me 'sir' unless I ask you a direct question."

"Right. That respect thing?"

"You're from Alabama so I figure you were raised to respect adults."

"I was. It's not just an Alabama thing. It's a southern thing."

"I agree."

"So, since we have nothing to do around hereâ|. "

Pride put up a hand. "Don't say that out loud."

"Why? Are you afraid someone may hear?"

"Every time I think out loud that I'm not busy, I get a phone call. It's like a curse or something. How about I give you the grand tour?"

*****End Flahsback*****

"Dwayne," Loretta said putting a hand on Pride's shoulder.

"Sorry, Loretta."

"You were a million miles away."

"Did the doctor come out yet?"

Loretta nodded. "They are taking him up to surgery. It will be a while."

"You don't have to stay."

"You don't either."

"I do, though."

"Then so will I. Merry and Sonja went down to the cafeteria with Sebastian and Patton. They were having trouble sitting still and waiting."

"Sebastian's supposed to be tracking those weapons we found."

"He handed them over to NOPD. Messier is on it. He's going to call when he knows something." Loretta looked at her friend. "He's their family too, Dwayne. You can't very well leave them out."

"How long is the surgery supposed to last?"

"Well, considering you don't want to do anything involving a bullet and a chest wound quickly, I'd say about two to three hours."

"I should call his family. His mom. His sister. Cade"

"You should wait and let them know when he's out."

"They need to know."

"You have nothing to tell them right now. Once he's out of surgery and safe you can call them and give them the news and let them know that he's going to be okay."

Pride nodded. "You want to go get a cup of coffee?"

Loretta smiled. "I thought you'd never ask."

2. Waiting Game

Chapter 2: Waiting Game

Sebastian jumped up from his chair when he saw Loretta and Dwayne walking in. "Any news?"

"He's still in surgery, Sebastian," Loretta replied. "We don't know anything more than we did before."

"LaSalle just can't die!"

"Sebastian, the doctors are doing all they can for him," Loretta said, sitting down. Sebastian sat back down at the table. "Some of it's going to be up to him."

"He promised me he'd teach me how to shoot a gun."

Dwayne threw a worried look at Loretta and then looked at the young lab tech. "When did he say that?"

"I asked him to shortly after we got taken hostage in autopsy. When Danny got shot."

"I'm sure Christopher will be just fine, Sebastian," Loretta said. "But I don't know that teaching you to shoot will be high on his priority list when he gets home."

Sebastian looked at Dwayne. "Maybe you can teach me, Agent Pride?"

"Sebastian, a gun is a big responsibility."

"I know. LaSalle said my first few lessons will be about safety and how to hold it and load it. He said I probably won't shoot it for a while."

"Sebastian, let's let Dwayne deal with one thing at a time, dear. Once we know Christopher is home safe we can talk about it, okay?"

"I'm just thinking I want to be prepared if it happens again."

"First of all, it's not going to happen again. Secondly, I appreciate you wanting to be prepared but we've all got other priorities."

Sebastian nodded. "What's taking them so long?"

"Why don't you go get some air, dear? I'll come get you if the doctor comes down or we head upstairs."

"Promise?"

"I promise. Now, go before I have someone carry you out."

Percy stood up. "I'll join you." She followed Sebastian out the door to a waiting area. "Were you serious about learning how to shoot?" Percy asked, leaning against a brick wall

Sebastian sat down on a bench. "I want to be able to protect Doctor Wade and myself."

"I can teach you but you have to keep it under wraps for a while."

"Okay. I can do that. I get the feeling LaSalle didn't ask permission, either."

"Did you see the look Pride gave Doctor Wade. I know he didn't ask."

"I'll go as slow as I need to. I usually learn pretty fast, but this is different."

"Very different. Do you have your own gun?"

"No. LaSalle was going to help me find one."

"It's against regs for me to let you use my service weapon. I have another one that you can use, though. They are considered 'off duty' weapons."

" LaSalle said he had a revolver I could use."

"So do I. Are you positive you can keep this a secret?"

Sebastian nodded. "Of course I wouldn't want you getting in trouble."

"I wouldn't be the only one. If I go down you're coming with me."

"I want to do this, Sonja. I need to do this."

Dwayne filled two coffee cups and walked back to the table. He placed the second one in front of Loretta. He sat down and looked at Brody. "You look tired. You should go home."

"I am but I'm not leaving until we hear something."

"I will call you."

"I know but I'm fine."

"Why don't we all head up to surgical waiting on the third floor," Loretta suggested. "We can wait for the doctor there"

Loretta went out to get Sebastian and Percy. Brody followed Pride to

the elevator. "You're blaming yourself, aren't you?" Pride asked, pushing the button for the third floor.

"If I had just tried a little harder to stop him, or gone with him."

"Then both of you could be in surgery fighting for your lives," Dwayne said. "Stop thinking about what you could have done."

The elevator doors opened and the pair walked out. "I could say the same thing about you."

"I'm responsible for my team," Pride said. "If anyone's to blame, it's me." He opened the door to the waiting room. "Go scope out enough chairs for all of us. I'll check us in."

Dwayne registered with the hospital volunteer and went to sit down. Loretta, Sebastian and Percy came in a few minutes later. "We just saw Patton in the hall," Loretta said. "He's going to visit a friend and then he'll come down."

"I just checked to see if the doctor had called and he hasn't. They will let us know when he does."

"Until then we just sit and wait."

"Yeah."

"What are you thinking?"

"I am trying to decide what I'm going to tell his mom."

"You aren't going to call her yet. Not until we know something."

Dwayne shook his head. "I thought about it. I really do want to have some solid news for them. They are going to want answers that I don't have right now."

"Sounds to me like you think Christopher wouldn't want them here."

"It's not a secret he doesn't have much of a relationship with his family."

"Perhaps you only know one side of the story."

Dwayne sighed. "If it will make you happy I'll make the call as soon as we hear from the doctor."

Loretta smiled. "I'm hoping he can make the call himself."

Dwayne nodded. "I sure hope so."

*****Flashback*****

"So you wanna be good cop or bad cop?" LaSalle asked.

"Neither. You're on your own for this one. I'll be right on the other side if you need me."

"After last time, King, I don't know if I'm ready to solo again."

"I've been watching you. You'll be fine. You've heard the phrase 'Get back on the horse'?"

"But what if I screw it up again?"

"You'll be fine. I'm five feet away. I know you can do this."

"I wish I was that confident."

Dwayne patted Chris on the back. "Deep breath. Get in there and break him."

Chris opened the interrogation room door and shut it hard. "You've been a busy man, Mr. Coates."

Dwayne watched through the window. Chris' confidence had returned and he made short work of the perp. Without hesitation he laid out crime scene and surveillance photos. In twenty minutes, Coates was singing like a canary. Confession was signed and Coates was on his way to jail. Chris walked out on a bit of a high. Pride met him in the courtyard. "You've got your groove back."

"It's about time too, although I think the evidence alone would have convicted him."

"You just needed a confidence boost."

"Thanks for believing in me, King."

"Now, for your favorite part."

"Paperwork?" Chris asked, sitting down at his desk. "You sure you don't want to help?"

"Can't. I got a date with my best girl tonight."

"Linda?"

"No. Laurel's school is having their annual father-daughter dance. She insisted on coming by on the way to show you her dress. Linda's bringing her here and I'm riding with them. I'll swing by and pick up my car on the way home."

"I can't wait."

"You just focus on that paperwork. I'm headed upstairs to change."

Chris began typing on his computer, checking his notes periodically and referring to the evidence. He looked up when he heard footsteps.

"Chris!" Laurel ran to him and hugged his neck. She stepped back.

"You like my dress?"

"It's real nice, Laurel. I heard you have a special date with your dad tonight."

"Mom's coming, too."

"Of course."

"Where is daddy, anyway?"

"He's upstairs changing. I've got to get this paperwork done before I can leave tonight."

"Laurel, let's go fix your hair again before your dad comes down," Linda said and they walked through the kitchen to the bathroom.

Ten minutes later Chris heard footsteps again and looked up to see Pride coming down the stairs. "I'd say you clean up mighty nice."

"You like it?"

"Yeah."

"Where are the girls?"

Laurel ran into the main squad from the kitchen. "Daddy!" She spun around. "You like my dress?"

"You look absolutely beautiful."

"Thanks," Laurel replied.

"You look beautiful, too," he said, kissing Linda on the cheek. "Shall we go?"

"We don't want to be late!" Laurel said.

"There is no way we'll be late," Pride replied. He turned to Chris. "You'll be okay here?"

"Fine. I won't be too much longer. I'll lock up."

"Thanks. See you tomorrow."

*****End Flashback*****

Pride stirred when he hear his name. "I'm doctor Williams, Agent Pride. I'm looking for the family of Chris LaSalle."

"We're family," Pride said, gesturing to the people sitting in the corner with him.

"I was expecting parents."

"Loretta stood up. "Doctor Williams, Christopher's family lives in Alabama. Agent Pride is his boss. Merri, Sonja and Patton are his team. Sebastian and I work with all of them on a daily basis. We may not be traditional, but we are his family."

"This is highly unusual," Doctor Williams replied. "But I do trust you, Doctor Wade. If you all will follow me, we'll go where there's a little more privacy."

The group walked into a small side conference room. Brody, Percy and Loretta took the chairs. Pride stood by the door. Sebastian leaned against the back wall. Patton rolled and parked next to Pride. Pride asked the question that was on everyone's mind. "How is he, doctor?"

"Well, we always like to start with good news around here. The bullet was removed. We've repaired the tear in his lung and he's breathing normally. Standard procedure is to intubate but we had to make sure his lung was working. We should be able to remove the tube once he awakens."

"But," Loretta said, glancing sideways at Dwayne and then back at the doctor.

"He slipped into a coma while on the operating table. My guess is the massive lump on the back of his head cause a bleed in his brain. I've sent him up for a CT and an MRI to confirm. If I'm right, he'll need surgery to relieve the pressure. He has an eighty percent chance to make a full recovery."

"Why only eighty if he's in otherwise good health?"

"You know as well as I do, Doctor Wade, when we are working with the brain there's always more of a risk."

"If the patient is in good shape that makes the chances better."

"I never give more than eighty percent of returning to a normal way of life. If you factor in ten percent of patients who may see a reduced quality of life."

"So, do the operation," Dwayne said. "He's a fighter and he won't give up."

"I've put in a call to a med-school colleague of mine who is one of the best neurosurgeons in the country. He lives in North Carolina but he's standing by to fly here by helicopter as soon as I make the call. The problem is, I need a family member to authorize the surgery. Next of Kin because of it's risks."

"What happens if we can't locate anyone?"

"We need to make an effort to reach them. We need to operate within twenty four hours or the survival rate drops to fifty percent."

"I'll have to go to the office to get his personnel file."

"No you don't, boss," Patton said. "I've got it."

"You hacked into NCIS personnel files?"

"Hey, it's LaSalle. I'll do anything for him!"

"Remind me later when this is all over Patton to fire you."

"Like the six other times you were supposed to fire me?"

"Exactly."

"Sure thing, boss man. You want these numbers?"

"Write them down. I'll get them from you later."

"Does she need to sign something?"

The doctor handed Pride a card. "Have her call me. She can give me verbal authorization that you can sign the forms."

"Can we see him?" Brody asked.

"After the brain scans he'll be moved to ICU. Visitors are supposed to be immediate family only, but considering they aren't here, I'll do what I can to add your names to the list. The nurse in charge tonight happens to be my wife. I'll let her know the situation." The doctor looked around the room. "He's sure a lucky young man to have so many people who care about him. I'll let you know when he's settled. You all can stay in here for a while if you'd like. There's a waiting room across from the ICU that is private as well."

"Thank you, doctor," Loretta said. "You may not feel like it, but you put our minds at ease for now."

"I'll talk to you again, later." Doctor Williams left the room.

"I think you all should go home," Dwayne said to his team. "We're going be waiting on them to schedule the surgery. I'll call you when I know something."

Patton handed Pride a sticky note "Here's those numbers you asked for." He looked at Sebastian. "Can you run me home?"

Sebastian nodded. "Don't forget to call us."

"I won't," Pride replied. Sebastian and Patton went out of the room. Pride pulled the door shut again. "You two should go, too."

"I'm good," Brody said. "I want to see him."

"Don't even ask me. I rode with her," Percy said, gesturing towards Brody. "I don't leave til she does."

"You know if I wanted to I could order you to go."

"But you won't," Percy said. "You really don't want us to go. You don't want to be here alone. I hate hospitals. I always have. As a kid I associated them with death."

"So what makes this so different?"

"LaSalle has to live so I have a chance to kill him." Percy said, chuckling.

"You'll have to stand in line," Pride replied. "I get first dibs and Loretta is second."

End

file.